

a g e n d a

CONTENTS

CATULLUS

A Selection from a New Version

by **PETER WHIGHAM**

Civilization and Local Sovereignty

by **NOEL STOCK**

July, 1960.

Number Twelve

Ninepence.

Then, in Verona, Campesani knows the 'Roman hand':
"One woman could command this song."

He sang,
and fourteen hundred years
later, it reappears—
in the barrel's bung
(the hand that Campesani knows)
codex from wine-bung springing,
as from the dung,
—the rose.

PETER WHIGHAM.

There is evidence of some worthwhile political thought in the first of the New Left Books: "Out of Apathy" (Stevens, 15s.) as there is also in the "New Left Review". A vital political party *could* be built on the basis of the new socialism evident in New Left circles if linked to the English heritage of Coke on the Magna Carta and Blackstone coupled with the best aspects of old fashioned liberalism. It would have to be prepared to correlate and compare scientifically the best and solid elements in English history and the political systems of other countries both past and present without regard to labels created by the falsifications of propaganda.

The "X Review" is the best literary periodical in circulation at present: their series "Poets on Poetry" has contained valuable material: everyone should read the article by Hugh MacDiarmid in their second issue.

"The Invisible Poet" (W. H. Allen, 30s.) by Hugh Kenner is really constructive criticism: the most considerable book on T. S. Eliot unlike the majority of critical works it should be read by anyone actively interested in practicing the art of poetry.

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CATULLUS

A Selection from a New Version
by PETER WHIGHAM

XXXI

Apple of islands, Sirmio, & bright peninsulas, set
in our soft-flowing lakes or in the folds of ocean,
with what delight delivered (safe & sound)

from Thynia

from Bithynia

you flash incredibly upon the darling eye.
What happier thought

than to dissolve

the mind of cares

the limbs from sojourning,
and to accept the down of one's own bed
under one's own roof

—held so long at heart...

and that one moment paying for all the rest.

So, Sirmio, with a woman's loveliness, gladly
echoing Garda's rippling lake-laughter,
and, laughing there, Catullus' house

catching the brilliant echoes!

XXXIV

Moving in her radiant care
chaste men and girls moving
wholly in Diana's care
hymn her in this.

Latonia's daughter, greatest
of the Olympian race, dropped
at birth beneath the olive trees
on Delian hills,

alive over mountain passes,
over green glades and
sequestered glens,
—in the talkative burn,

Juno Lucina in the groans
of parturition, Hecat, fear—
ful at crossed ways, the nymph
of false moonlight.

You whose menstrual course
divides our year, stuff
the farmer's harvest barn
with harvesting.

Sacred, by whatever name invoked
in whatever phase you wear, turn
upon our Roman brood, of old
your shielding look.

LV

Where
 if it's not too much to ask
are you hiding,
 Camerius?
I've searched for you in the circus
in the parks
 among the bookstalls
even in Church (!)
 I have accosted
on Pompey's Broadway
 tart after tart
meeting

 as you would expect
with a succession of blank looks.
"Where's Camerius, you low-down whores?"
One opens her bodice,
"You could find him between these pink tits
if you looked."

 A job
I reflected, for Hercules.

 Why, Camerius
why arrogate to yourself this scarcity value?...

If I were Europa's bronze jailer
doing my rounds in Crete,
if I were fleet Ladas

 or feather-footed Perseus,
if I rode the sky like Pegasus
or with the dazzling swiftness of Rhesus' team,
—supposing I had the sandals of all the winds
I should still find myself sapped dry
eaten with fatigue

 looking for you,
'friend'.

Come, Camerius, out with it
bare your precious secret to the day
where are we likely to find you?
who are these girls

pliant as cream
who detain you?

Remember,
to keep the tongue locked in the mouth
is to reject love's seasoning :
love-talk enhances love-acts.
Alternatively,

if you want to,
bolt up your mouth...
only
divulge to Catullus the whereabouts of this *amour*,
so we may share her.

LXII

Young Men

Gather young men as the twilight gathers
Vesper gleams faintly in heaven
it is time to bestir
time to abandon the wedding tables
for the bride comes through the dusk
it is time for the bride-hymn.
Hymen Hymenaeus attend o Hymen!

Maidens

Watch where the young men gather by the porch-doors
face them while Vesper hangs fire over Thessaly
they are gathering quickly
intent on their song
on contesting the bride-song with us
response versus response.
Hymen Hymenaeus attend o Hymen!

Young Men

Here is no palm for the asking
observe these
young girls conferring together with girlish seriousness
their care
a sole-minded intensity
must
produce the worth while
while we
distracted

deserve our defeat
our minds on one thing
with only an ear for the song
: success waits on devotion.

Come! bend minds
to the business

girls flower in song
man makes response.

Hymen Hymenaeus attend o Hymen!

Maidens

What flame glows more pitilessly in heaven than yours
Vesper :

under your gaze
the daughter wrenched from her mother's clasp
from the mother's clasp
twined there

torn apart
her maidenhead placed under a young man's burning hand :
what jackbooting of lost cities

pitiless as such an act?
Hymen Hymenaeus attend o Hymen!

Young Men

What flames shines more resplendently in heaven than yours
Vesper :

under your sign the marriage bond is sealed
the young man's troth
the father's pledge

is effected
in your ardour the consummation is joined :
what hour from the gods

resplendent as such an hour?
Hymen Hymenaeus attend o Hymen!

Maidens

Vesper has bereft us of one . . .

* * * * *

Young Men

With your rising
the night watchman guards against
furtive lovers on the prow! by night
whom you as Lucifer
may disconcertingly discover
still at their thefts
for maidens' acts belie their mock complaints
affecting aversion

for what they most desire.
Hymen Hymenaeus attend o Hymen!

Maidens

When withdrawn in some walled garden
a rose blooms
safe from the farm plough
from farm beasts
strong under sun
fresh in light-free air
sprouting in rain showers
that rose is beauty's paragon for man or woman's pleasure,
but once the bud has blown
—when the thin stalk is left
no paragon remains for man or woman's pleasure
so, intact
a girl stays treasured of her sex
but let her lose her maidenhead
her close petals once polluted
she cannot give the same delight again to men
no longer be the cynosure of virgins.
Hymen Hymenaeus attend o Hymen!

Young Men

When in an open field
unyoked a vine droops
no vine-limbs shake to the wind
no ripe grape-clusters sprout
there the soft plant stoops under its own weight
the vine-tips flop to their roots
that vine no hind nor husbandman will husband,
but yoke her to her elm-pole mate
and hinds & husbandmen in droves will husband her
so, intact
a girl grows withered in her sex
but yoke her to her mate in her ripe season
she will yield her parents ease
she will yield delight to men.
Hymen Hymenaeus attend o Hymen!

Young Men & Maidens

Resign as your father resigns you to this man
~~History has become a complicated gadget for the collection of~~
strength lies in surrender
father & mother in concert
resign you
incline to their will

remember your
 own maidenhead is not truly your own
 one part to your father
 one to your mother
 only a third to yourself
 incline then to their will & consign
 your share as they theirs
 with the bride-gift,
 to this man,
 in wedlock.
 Hymen Hymenaeus attend o Hymen!

CIVILIZATION AND LOCAL SOVEREIGNTY

by NOEL STOCK

It is advisable for anyone wanting to conserve a tradition or a 'way of life' first of all to do some stocktaking to discover precisely what it is they wish to conserve. One reason, the main reason perhaps, why sincere apologists of 'free enterprise' have had so little success is that they have not properly defined 'free enterprise' and have in fact allowed—not even allowed, have never even recognised it as something distinct from another and in many ways opposed type of mercantilism which has long since usurped that convenient label. And so, using a false terminology which they found already prepared for them, and to which a misleading selection of historical so-called 'facts' had been firmly attached, these apologists have failed to distinguish two types of mercantilism: one, a mercantilism of personal probity with responsibility to a definite locality; and the other, an international mercantilism, responsible, in the end, only to itself.

I do not wish to push this distinction too far, as there is certainly some overlapping, nor do I wish to make excessive claims for the mercantilism of personal probity, the faults of which are recorded in accessible history; but that aspect of it especially relevant to today is the fact that it existed as something visible, something everybody could see, operating within a context over which the participants had some sort of control. It was a context in which personal probity was possible as something positive and not just as a negative withdrawal. It was not an unlimited 'free enterprise', but 'free enterprise' within the bounds of reason and commonsense, as those terms were understood in the 18th century; it was the same to which John Adams referred when he said it was very unmercantile to do business on borrowed capital.

International mercantilism on the other hand, which is firmly convinced of its own super-sovereignty, has no definite locality, in any organic sense, and consists largely in the right to do business anywhere, anytime, but even more to say what is good for "all men" and to force societies to follow its own blueprint. It operates within a context so enormous and complex as to render personal probity, in the positive sense, an impossibility, and its history is one of continual evasion of personal responsibility by means of corporative, joint-stock and other devices. This mercantilism is visible from at least the time of the Tudor goldsmith, Sir Thomas Gresham who was agent for Dutch finance and responsible more than any other man, except perhaps Charles II, for the introduction of the worst aspects of international mercantilism into England. Gresham began the process by forcing a reform of the coinage in the 16th century which linked England to the international system; Charles threw the way open to its fulfillment by his coinage legislation of 1666-67.

It should be made clear at this point that doing business on an international scale is not necessarily the same thing as international mercantilism. The Alberti family of Florence, and later the Medici, were bankers and businessmen who had dealings in many parts of the world; but they remained Florentines; their money was used to glorify Florence, not by a dumping of large sums for spectacular effect, but by the employment of the best living artists and librarians for the establishment, in Florence, of a cultural vortex which attempted to discriminate and draw to itself the best the world had to offer. It was a civic or 'parochial' culture but it was guided by international *criteria* and itself established criteria to guide the rest of the world. This culture of international criteria must not be confused with today's cultural internationalism, close brother of international mercantilism, which fears the perfection of great art because great art can be achieved only by the intractable few.

II

In the past great literature has been used (as L. R. Lind said of Latin poetry) to express "the facts of some branch of learning or information." The tragedy of our culture has been the separation of monetary knowledge from general literary culture. Not only has literature suffered, but monetary history as well. The branch of learning called Economic History has become a complicated gadget for the collection of 'proof' that 'great progress' has taken place, is taking place, and will continue to take place so long as we continue to ignore such purely literary considerations as quality and

perfection of design and form. The past is made to conform to ideas and terminology manufactured under the influence of international mercantilism, and where it cannot be made to conform, then it is 'wrong'.

Perhaps the greatest single loss caused by the clichés of international mercantilism has been the loss of the knowledge that a long line of divergent thinkers struggled during several thousand years towards a common ground, namely clarification of the idea of an efficient mechanism of exchange compatible with Justice. The Christian maxim that the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath, was understood in relation to particular application in the Greece of Aristotle, and in China earlier still. Aristotle saw that the true purpose of an economic system is to facilitate the exchange of goods and services as smoothly and equitably as possible; and that goods and services do not, or should not, exist to facilitate the buying and selling of money. He saw money as governed by law and subject to the *will* of man. The same urge towards clarification of this matter is visible in Cicero and St. Ambrose of Milan; in a number of Roman and Byzantine emperors and historians; we find it in the troubadour Piere Cardinal, in Dante, and in Shakespeare. It is present in a long line of more recent thinkers whose differences have been served up in abundance, as their essential unity in struggling towards this common ground has not. Such thinkers as Swift (*Examiner*, 1710), Voltaire, Berkeley (*Querist*, 1750), Hume (*Political Discourses*, 1752), Samuel Johnson, Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Gibbon, Shelley, Cobbett, Ruskin, etc. Marlowe when he wrote "Base bullion for the stampes sake we allow," was condensing into ten syllables a good deal of past history which since his time has been all but lost in the welter of bullionist theories and their offspring. Useful historical data is also to be found in Pope :

*Blest paper credit, last and best supply!
That lends corruption lighter wings to fly!
Gold imp'd by thee can compass hardest things,
Can pocket states, can fetch or carry kings*

Nowadays with most education and channels of communication tending to bolster the present system, one hesitates to put forward the suggestion that something valuable has been lost which was highly regarded by many of the men whose observations and refining of knowledge built the basis upon which our world rests. In accepting today's material sciences, for instance, we accept the great pioneer work of medieval scientists like St. Albertus and Grosseteste. And yet we reject without even casual examination the work of these same men whenever it relates to economics or ethics or even remotely impinges on our mercantile habits.

III

The idea of mercantilism of personal probity was strong in the American colonies and early United States and was carried into national policy by a number of presidents: Adams, Jefferson, Jackson, Van Buren, Tyler, Polk, Lincoln and Johnson. It is entirely appropriate to our age of 'brain-washing' that Andrew Jackson who spent his life attempting to preserve the concrete elements of local and national sovereignty has been served up in our day as a sort of symbol of the new Deal. The image of Lincoln the country hick has unfortunately overshadowed that other Lincoln, who, in his Fourth Annual Message, a few months before his death, suggested a scheme for spreading the national debt among ordinary people.

It is a tragic fact that if people do not look after their national history, they will lose it, one way or another.

In his *Fluctuations of Gold* (1838), Alexander Von Humboldt warned that the world's supply of gold could not possibly keep pace with the needs of humans and of commerce, but people were in no mood for scientific exactitudes which called for the exercise of monetary intelligence. In Prussia, Von Schultz raised a voice in favour of national independence outside the international system, as did Sir William Harcourt, in England; but to no avail. International mercantilism achieved final victory with the war of 1914, after a series of surreptitious currency alterations in various countries during the second half of the 19th and early 20th century.

Since 1914 the fight between 'free enterprise' and 'government control' has been very largely a sham fight and has served to bamboozle further, an already bamboozled public. The Great Depression and New Deal placed this struggle permanently upon the national and international stage—two errors at one another's throats, out of which no good can possibly come.

It should be remembered that international mercantilism has contributed little or nothing to the sum of human knowledge. The machines it uses, and all its key ideas, are the products of a cultural struggle lasting thousands of years. Its enormous material power lies simply in the correlation of machines the basic components of which were invented and developed during an earlier period. International mercantilism is, in fact, a parasite, living almost entirely upon the past.

Against this 'controlled chaos' (under which, for example, the Belgian government was forced in recent years to borrow Belgian money in New York, to the advantage of neither the people of Belgium nor of the United States) the salvation of what is left of 'western civilization' would seem to me to require some restoration of the mercantilism of personal probity; some system under which it would again be possible for a definite locality to maintain local sovereignty in local affairs by the control of purchasing-power needed for local purposes.

The cost of a set of Agenda (1-12) is 7/6d., in U.S.A. \$ 1.50.

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Henry Swabey: Note on Coke etc.

Editorial statement of policy.

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Osip Mandelstam: Leningrad translated by P. Russell.

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Noel Stock: A Poet's Life and Context (Long poem).

Other poems by Donald Hall and Peter Whigham.

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